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MEMORIAL ADDRESS ON ABRAHAM LINCOLN

DELIVERED BY

HON. JAMES G. MONAHAN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Mr. MONAHAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, the life of Abraham Lincoln reads like a romance, yet we know it is true.

He was born in a log cabin in Kentucky 111 years ago to-day, a building not like the comfortable houses of to-day, but a small, illy constructed affair, with no floor save the earth, no ceiling, only one room, no glass windows, but one door, and a fireplace with an outside chimney, and here he lived until he was 7 years of age, when his parents moved to Indiana.

They were the pioneers in that virgin forest. The month was October, and winter was approaching. They did not have time to erect a cabin. They built a camp. A hole 14 feet long was dug on a side hill facing the south, logs were cut for the east and west ends. The earth was made to serve for the north side, while the south side remained absolutely open. There was no floor, stove, fireplace, or windows. The fire was built and the cooking done in front of the open south side, and here the family lived for an entire year before better quarters could be provided. A year later, when Lincoln was but 9 years old, his mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, died. This was a blow that nearly crushed him. Between Lincoln and his father there was but little in common and no bond of sympathy.

From his father he inherited that great physical strength and endurance, so essential in pioneer life, but nothing else. It was from his mother that he inherited that mystical mind, that lofty soul, that patience and judgment that was to distinguish him above all men, and when he returned from her fresh grave his child face wore a veil of melancholy that never left it.

There was no clergyman present at the funeral of this modern Mary, and several years afterward young Lincoln contrived to have a funeral discourse commemorative of the merits and humble and unobtrusive virtues preached by an itinerant preacher, in memory of the mother of one charged with a mission akin to the divine.

The following year the father married a widow by the name of Sallie Bush and brought her with three children, two daughters and a son, to his desolate home, and the coming of this noble woman in all probability gave Lincoln to the ages.

She loved him from the first, as if he were her own child. She developed his inherited ability and taught him many of the practical things of life. She brought cleanliness and order to the home, established a family altar, and made it possible for Lincoln to learn to read and write by sending him to school for four months.

And to-day, when all the civilized world is paying homage to the memory of one of the greatest of the race, can we not in spirit place a wreath of love upon the humble graves of Nancy Hanks Lincoln, who gave him birth and transmitted to him those qualities of mind, heart, and soul which made him great, and to Sallie Bush Lincoln, who developed those inherited qualities, taught him the practical side of life, and made it possible for him to become what he was? [Applause.]

When Lincoln was 17 years old his only sister died, and another great sorrow veiled his soul; and in his anguish he cried out again and again, "What have I to live for now?" Indeed, his suffering was so intense that his rude neighbors not only wondered at it but feared he might take his own life.

They did not know that of the few cords that bound him to life one snapped at the bedside of a dying mother; another broke by the newly made grave in the solemn forest; but still another was held by destiny and was to save him for the great work of the future.

He was now 17 years old; and Henry C. Whitney, in his Life and Works of Lincoln, thus describes him:

> At the age of 17 he was six and a third feet high, his feet and hands were unsually large, and his legs and arms disproportionately long; his head was small and phrenologically defective; his body very diminutive for one of his height. His walk was awkward, his gestures still more so; his skin was of a dirty, yellowish brown, and shriveled and baggy, even at that age. He was attired in buckskin pants, which failed to conceal his blue shin bones; his shirt was of a fabric known to pioneer, and to no other life, as linsey-woolsey; and in winter he was clad in what is known as a warmus; and, finally, a coonskin cap, homemade, and moccasins, also homemade, protected and decorated, respectively, his upper and nether extremities. He was bizarre looking even in that primitive community.

In the spring of 1830 the Lincoln family left Indiana and moved to Macon County, Ill., and here for a time the future emancipator did all kinds of work incident to pioneer life. He split rails, cleared land, kept store, and made several trips down the Mississippi on flatboats to New Orleans. But during all this time, whenever the opportunity presented, he was reading good books and studying, and, in addition to the work above referred to, he became a captain in the Black Hawk War, a surveyor, and later postmaster at New Salem, and here began the study of the law, was finally admitted to the bar in 1837, and began the practice of his chosen profession. In 1834 he was elected to the State legislature, serving in all three terms. In 1846 he was elected to Congress, served one term, and refused to stand for a reelection. During all this time Lincoln showed no marked ability. As an attorney he was not well grounded in the principles of the law, nor was he a well-read lawyer. He tried his cases more upon the principles of right and wrong than by the code of practice, and, because of his known honesty and his strength with the jury, won a majority of his cases. There was nothing brilliant in his record as a State legislator, and he himself always contended that his one term in Congress was a failure.

The hour for the great crisis had not yet come. It was still several years away, and the evolution of this plain, awkward child of the frontier into the great leader he became was not complete, and his statesmanship was still in a chrysalis state.

He took an active part in political discussions and gradually came to be regarded as one of the strong men of Illinois, and

slowly but surely was laying the foundation for future usefulness, but neither he nor his friends ever dreamed of the heights to which he would attain. Like Rome, Lincoln was not made in a day.

From 1849, when his term in Congress ended, to 1854, Lincoln had apparently retired from public life, but with the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the opening of the campaign by Stephen A. Douglas in a great speech at Springfield, on October 3, Lincoln was unanimously chosen to answer it, which he did on the following day, speaking for three hours and making one of the greatest efforts of his life. Douglas himself declaring he had heard nothing like it in the Senate. This speech first brought Lincoln into public notice, and two years later, at the Republican national convention, he received 110 votes for Vice President.

In 1858 he was nominated by his party for United States Senator against Stephen A. Douglas, and immediately challenged his opponent to a series of joint debates.

Douglas was one of the greatest platform orators of his generation, the idol of his party, and the author of the Missouri Compromise measure, and his friends looked for an easy triumph, but Lincoln proved more than his equal, and at Freeport trapped Douglas into an admission that, while it won for him the Senatorship, lost him the Presidency. Lincoln, on the other hand, lost the Senatorship and won the Presidency, for in 1860 he was nominated at Chicago and in the following November elected, receiving 180 votes in the Electoral College against 72 for Breckenridge, 39 for Bell, and 12 for Douglas, and on the following 4th of March was duly inaugurated, and in a few days later the Civil War had begun.

To-day we are commemorating the birth of a man, and this is not a fitting time or place to enter into the details of that mighty struggle. History has recorded how, answering to the call and following the guidance of the great Lincoln, the hosts of freedom fought, bled, suffered, and died, and how mothers, wives, sisters, and sweethearts gave of their all, and with tearful eyes, on bended knees, prayed to God while the armies fought. How, after four long years of bloodshed and carnage, the Nation was saved, the Union made indissoluble, the flag rendered stainless, slavery abolished, and for the first time in the history of the race the brotherhood of man was virtually written into law. [Applause.]

History also tells us how in the moment of stupendous victory, enveloped in the halo of radiant success, the bullet of an assassin ended the life of the mighty leader; how the pæans of victory were changed to wails of sorrow; how his body was carried back to Springfield, where much of his life was spent, where his old neighbors and friends lived, back to the rolling prairies of the State of his adoption, to be buried in the soil he loved so well.

A few days ago I stood in front of the old Ford Theater in Washington, the building in which Lincoln was shot, then walked around to the rear and saw the door through which Booth escaped, and the spot where he mounted his horse and galloped away into the darkness was pointed out.

Across the street is the house in which Lincoln died, now a national museum, filled with Lincoln relics. There were pieces of timber from the cabin in which he was born, from the log

house in Indiana, there were axes and mauls he had used and rails he had split, the clothes he had worn, the office desk he had used, and the cheap furniture of his home. There were public documents and private letters he had written, and hundreds of articles of interest which Capt. O. H. Oldroyd had for more than 50 years been collecting. The room in which he died has been kept as nearly as possible as it was on the night of the tragedy.

This room was in a cheap boarding house and occupied at the time by a private soldier. It was about 10 feet wide by 16 long. It had but one window, the floor was uncarpeted, and the ceiling so low that I could reach it with my uplifted hand. And here, amidst these squalid surroundings, in this dingy room, the great soul left the weary body, and for the first time Abraham Lincoln found peace and rest. The man of sorrows, who knew and felt grief, who trod the wine press alone, who had led a great and progressive people successfully through the mightiest struggle in the annals of the race, who had written in letters of living light in the blue dome of heaven, where all mankind could read the words "Union," "Freedom," and "Progress," now belonged to the ages. [Applause.]

The world still wonders what there was in this crude awkward child of the frontier that made him the commanding figure in the greatest epochal conflict of the race.

Born in poverty and destitution, with nothing to awaken or stimulate ambition, better things or higher conditions, he was ambitious. He attended school but four months, yet some of his productions, notably his second inaugural address and Gettysburg speech, are classics.

The Gettysburg Address you have heard read this morning so beautifully, so expressively by one who lives not in Danville, not in Illinois, but in the hearts of every man, woman, and child in the United States, Uncle JOE CANNON. [Applause.]

With but a limited acquaintance outside of Illinois he won the Presidency from the greatest and best of his party, and after his inauguration there was not a member of his Cabinet who did not consider himself a bigger man than he, until they, according to Col Watterson, "one by one measured mental swords with him and were brought to their intellectual knees never to rise again."

Wherein, then, did Lincoln's greatness lie?

A brief review of the man and his work may aid in answering this question. Lincoln was an intense student, not only of books but of men and conditions, and as day by day he absorbed knowledge, which his great memory retained, he became in time a very learned man, though never a scholarly one.

He was always true to his higher self and courageously stood for what he believed to be right. There was nothing of the trimmer or demagogue in his makeup.

He was honest with his fellow men, true to his friends, and ingratitude had no part in his mental makeup, hence when he made friends he always kept them, and because of his honesty the people trusted him.

He acted upon judgment, not impulse, and the hysterical and ultra never appealed to him. During the Civil War often his most bitter assailants were not the men in arms against the Government, not even the "copperhead" element in the North, but the abolition extremists. His patience was as great as his

judgment was sound, and Lincoln the Man always waited for the Place and the Hour. He was a genius of common sense; his judgment of men was marvelous, and his trained mind went straight to the heart of all questions, great or small, as from day to day he grandly arose to meet new conditions and unexpected obstacles. These are some of the reasons why Lincoln was superlatively great during the war and was able to accomplish all that was done.

Because of his honesty the people trusted him; because of loyalty to friends and principles they loved him; and because of his judgment, tact, and patience they sustained him.

Historic man waited 4,000 years for the coming of Lincoln. Such a character never lived before, and the world may never see his like again. He was created for a purpose; he was a man with a mission; and, with his work done, his mission accomplished, he was by a loving Father kissed from scenes of bloodshed and strife to eternal rest and happiness. May we not believe that a fond mother was waiting to wipe the stamp of melancholy from his tired face, and that to-day a happy and reunited family are smiling somewhere among the stars as they look down upon this and similar scenes.

His life will ever be an inspiration for better deeds, higher aspirations, and loftier purposes.

None can read of his life and works without being made a better man or woman. The pathetic story of his early life and constant struggles with poverty and destitution will fill the heart of man with deeper sympathy for the poor and needy. His successful struggles under constant adversity to better his condition will be a beacon light that will guide many a storm-buffeted boy or girl into the harbor of success. His loyalty to friends and principle, his rugged honesty, and the sweetness of a private life as pure as an angel's dream will make for purer homes, better citizenship, warmer and more lasting friendships until time shall be no more, while his unselfish patriotism and devotion to his country and humanity will forever stand as a guide for future generations.

Had the Nation in 1861 been guided by the voice and wisdom of Lincoln, emancipation would have come without pecuniary loss to the slaveholder nor would the country have been torn by the horrors of Civil War.

Had Lincoln been permitted to live, I believe there would have been no carpet-bag government in the South [applause], and many of the so-called reconstruction laws would never have been placed upon our statute books. In his death the North lost its safest counsellor, the South its best and truest friend. [Applause.]

In this hour when hysteria and emotionalism are attempting to dethrone judgment and reason and plunge the race into chaos and ruin, could Lincoln act and speak he would say:

"The pages of American history are resplendent with the names and records of great and honest men. Among whom we can point to a Washington, a Jefferson, a Jackson, a Webster, a Douglas, a Tilden, a Blaine, a Thurman, and a McKinley."

Each of these men in his day and generation fought the good fight, kept the faith, and finished the course; and, because judgment, not hysteria, was the guiding star of each, they lived respected, died regretted, and the fruits of their labor have come as a heritage to us. [Applause.]

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Take men of this class as a guide for yourself and children, rather than these modern political Jeremiahs, swashbucklers, and civilization destroyers, who to-day are bounding from one platform to another, preaching the doctrine of class hatred, suspicion, doubt, and disaster, and raising new political issues every day. [Applause.]

Have faith in your fellow man and keep faith with him. [Applause.] The destiny of the race leads ever onward and upward; and, from the beginning of history, it has grandly kept step to the music of its mission.

There are more honest men in the world to-day than there were yesterday. There will be more to-morrow than there are to-day. [Applause.]

He would point to the great highway of life, along which earth's millions are marching to a higher plane of existence.

He would ask you to leave the sensational press to be consumed in the fires of hatred and passion their hysteria has lighted, the Bolshevist to suffocate and decay in the filth of his own making, and the demagogue and agitator to gnaw at the fleshless bones of monsters their wicked fancies or diseased imaginations have created.

He would point to the past and its lessons where judgment has always finally prevailed and truth ever triumphed; and then he would point to the future where the beacon light of hope eternally shines, and in the name of Justice, Honesty, Progress, and Liberty bid us look up and march on.

He would urge that equity and fairness be made the controlling forces to guide the race and that no class should be permitted to harass or destroy the commercial prosperity or social life of 100,000,000 of people who are outside the ranks of greedy capital and organized labor. [Applause.] He would say that the Ship of State must be manned by crews who are loyal to the organic laws and government founded and transmitted by the mighty Washington; that she must be kept away from the rocks that wreck and waves that overwhelm.

He would command that she immediately leave the slough of unrest fed by the poisonous waters of greed, graft, and isms and once again sail out into the boundless bounding ocean of Americanism, and as the tides of Justice once again clasp her keel and the breezes of Progress fill her sails as she slowly moves out to sea to continue her journey to her final port—Destiny, may we not believe that in words of love, admonition, and hope as a parting *bon voyage* and "God bless you," he would say:

Fear not each sudden sound and shock,
'Tis of the wave and not the rock;
'Tis but the flapping of the sail,
And not a rent made by the gale!
In spite of rock and tempests roar,
In spite of false lights on the shore,
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
Are all with thee; are all with thee!

Mr. Speaker, this Nation will never die nor the sun of Americanism grow dim so long as our people cherish the name and are guided by the teachings and example of the sweetest, greatest, grandest character in human history—Abraham Lincoln. [Applause.]

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